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Language for the Professions: A New Perspective on Course Design

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1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the major changing conditions in which professions perform have led institutions and universities to review their strategies in terms of language teaching. As far as Spanish instruction is concerned, ever-growing regional integration of the United States and Latin America (with Mexico in particular), and the considerable increase in the Spanish-speaking population in the United States has caused the need to train professionals to perform their tasks entirely in a second language. This trend has resulted in a growing demand by the student population to obtain language instruction oriented to meet their specific professional needs, transforming the importance ascribed to foreign language into a key tool to access a much more competitive global market.

This new scenario poses a challenge for language departments, which must quickly adapt their course "supply" to meet this growing demand. Such an adjustment process is difficult for several reasons. Firstly, instructors traditionally specialized in linguistics and literature are still reluctant to depart from their fields of interest and competence for fear of compromising their intellectual identity (Aharoni, 1994), leaving a void of content instructors in this new field. Secondly, even though the student population demanding Spanish instruction for professional purposes has noticeably increased (Branan, 1996), it is still not large and stable enough to justify investment in the development of language courses for specific careers, with the exception of Business, Health Care, and Law. Lastly, the speed at which this change is taking place has not yet allowed for a clear definition of the role played by language teaching for professional purposes, leaving the balance between content and form, and the importance ascribed to cultural issues as an added value to language courses for professional purposes, still as sources of debate.

As a result of this process, the supply of Spanish courses for professional purposes is currently divided into two main segments. The first one is oriented to specialized and comprehensive instruction in highly-demanded

professional fields such as Medicine and Health Care, Law, and Business (Branan, 1998). Courses in this segment have the advantages of all tailor-made courses: relative facility to define goals and design, the possibility of covering the content exhaustively, and the fact of being directed to a student population homogeneous in interests and highly motivated to learn. Not surprisingly, this type of course has found wide acceptance. However, it presents the risk of lacking usefulness for students who have still not chosen a major or minor, of surviving in institutions with insufficient specialized demand, and of providing a perspective that is exclusively restricted to the course's field of specialization, thus limiting the student's further ability to perform in a much more complex professional environment.

The second segment has arisen from the need to overcome these problems and complement the available supply. The segment addresses a number of professional fields in the same course, providing a wider and more general perspective of each setting. However, this focus poses a number of challenges: the ability to define precise goals that may orient the design phase, the possibility of assigning enough depth to the content so as to ensure its utility for the student, and the capacity to achieve a maximum degree of cohesion among themes, aimed at a heterogeneous student population with various interests and aspirations. Interestingly enough, both segments share the common goal of achieving balance between content and the priority formerly ascribed to language, determining the language requirement for the course.

This article describes the processes involved in the design of a Spanish Course for the Professions along the lines of the second segment described. It provides a case study for the successful application of marketing techniques in the design of a language course, as suggested by Cowles (1998) and others. The detailed description of all stages involved in this design process will hopefully help show the utility of this approach for the further curricular enhancement of other language courses and programs.

The outcome of this process is an innovative curriculum model that strategically overcomes the challenges presented. Its novelty lies in its composition as a multi-layered object. The top layer constitutes the mainstream, where students perceive the uniformity of the course and build their expectations with respect to its overall utility. This unifying framework analyzes the main issues of Latin America's political, economic and social scenarios, aiming at portraying Latin America's reality and building cultural awareness. The middle layer is designed to cover the particular professional fields,

where students satisfy their needs for communicative competence in their specific disciplines. At this stratum, each profession is presented in the context of its thematic area. Finally, the bottom layer aims at developing grammar accuracy in communication skills, naturally promoted through the study of each professional setting.

2. The Marketing Approach for Course Design

2.1. *Product Development Process: An Overview*

Despite its wide acceptance in the business arena as an essential tool for strategic design, little use is given to marketing techniques in academia. Their advantages are not fully exploited for the design of new courses or for the evaluation and revision of ongoing study programs. In a world that changes rapidly and requires the constant evolution of teaching contents and techniques, their use would seem the most efficacious way of continuously adjusting to the needs of the student population. The utilization of this methodological procedure optimizes the output of the design process, given a course's academic goals and the needs of the target students.

In the corporate world, managers deal daily with the difficult task of creating and choosing the best products for their firms to take to the market. This complex chore involves considering the interaction of a large number of players in the economic environment: customers, competitors, suppliers and investors, among others. The development of marketing techniques has paved the way to facilitate this process. In the 1960s, corporations departed from the sales/production oriented paradigm claiming their goal to be to provide the customer with what was being produced, and embraced the concept that believed in providing products and services that met the needs and wants of customers. As D'Andrea (2001) pointed out, "With the exception of collectors, nobody buys products for the products themselves, but for the services they provide to satisfy certain needs." (p.84) With consumers as every firm's reason to exist, managers and product developers soon acknowledged the primary importance of reading the needs of customers and competitors, and of scanning the relevant business environment for future opportunities. The better they could understand what customers expected from the product, the closer they would be to designing a successful product.

As a result of this "market oriented" transformation, the main role of marketing has been to interpret the environment and to make decisions

regarding which key customers to serve, which competitors to challenge and what bundle of product or service attributes to assemble for the marketplace. The successful interpretation of the environment involves the study of the current conditions and trends in the market, as well as the evolution of customers and suppliers in the political, economic, technological and cultural scenarios. This analysis helps determine the niches of opportunity that can be exploited.

The selection of key customers, challenging competitors and product attributes are contained in processes called "market segmentation" and "market positioning." The former is a method by which companies recognize that differences exist between two or more customer groups, and that these groups will respond differently to products made available in the marketplace, according to their different needs. The outcome of this procedure helps the firm specialize in a particular group and define its product in order to best meet the needs of the target consumer. On the other hand, the market positioning process helps the firm minimize the threats from possible competitors in the segment of interest. It also provides a better understanding of a company's own competitive position, and how its products and services are perceived by the market. Altogether, this analysis allows a better assessment of areas of opportunity as well as vulnerability with respect to existing and future competitors.

The last element to consider is the so-called SWOT analysis. The analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats groups key information into two main categories considering internal and external factors, and then classifies them in two subcategories according to their positive or negative impact. Internal factors involve strengths and weaknesses within the firm, such as strategies (price, promotion, procurement and product policies), internal organization and market positioning. External factors include the opportunities and threats posed by the firm's environment, such as legislation, the political scene, and socio-cultural and technological changes. The goal of the SWOT analysis is to identify key issues that have to be taken into account in the strategic choice of products and markets for the future success of the organization.

All of these elements have proved to be very fruitful in the development of new products, minimizing the chances of ending up with a small demand, underestimating competitors' capacities, choosing the wrong market positioning or mismatching the market opportunities with the firm's capabilities.

2.2. *Marketing Analysis for Curriculum Development of a Spanish for the Professions Course*

Having reviewed the main features of a product development process along with the potential advantages of its application in the design of language courses, we will transfer its implementation to the case of the Spanish Course for the Professions at the University of Pennsylvania.

Initially, the original product concept had been defined as "a Spanish course for professional purposes, oriented to the study of a number of professional areas within a unique curriculum." In order to refine this concept better, it was necessary to have a model representing the interactions and constraints imposed on the course by its environment. For functional purposes, and to maintain the already suggested parallelism with marketing guidelines, I decided to model the course's environment as that of a business unit, operating within a corporate organization. In the corporate world, a business unit functions semi-autonomously, defining its own goals and developing its own production and marketing strategies. It has to comply with the corporation's shared goals and guidelines, and has also to position itself in such a way as to coordinate and make good use of synergies with the other business units. As such, the Spanish course for professional purposes had to define its own curricular goals, maximize its complementary and transferable qualities with other courses, and simultaneously respond to the needs of the Department of Romance Languages.

The first stage in the product development process called for the identification of the prospective consumers. In this sense, and similarly to a business unit, the course would have two different customers. The *external* consumer, the ultimate recipient of the product, was the student population at the University of Pennsylvania with Spanish skills ranging from intermediate-high to superior levels. This population presented diverse language needs. It included quasi-native students or heritage speakers, American students, and students whose mother tongue was Portuguese. The various ways in which these students had come to learn the language—inherited, through formal study, or through geographical proximity and daily interaction with native Spanish speakers, respectively—called for a careful and varied design of activities that would provide:

- Formal language instruction, oriented to students whose mother tongue was Portuguese

- Fluency and variety in discourse and a context that may provide the opportunity to apply learned structures, oriented to American students or to those with previous formal instruction too rigid in structure or form
- Appropriate and more elaborate register and grammar reinforcement, for quasi-native students who had learned Spanish in the familiarity of their homes.

It is worth noticing that the definition of the target student population had not included segmentation by professional fields, implying that the course would simultaneously attempt to attract:

- Students still undecided in their choice of a specific career concentration
- Students already oriented to a career concentration for which there was no supply of content-specific courses in Spanish
- Students already oriented to a career concentration for which there were content-specific courses in Spanish.

The decision not to restrict the market for the course to the two first categories mainly followed the existence of thematic niches not covered by the existing content-specific courses, which will be described later in this article.

The second salient feature of the target student population was the diversity of existing professional fields of interest. In this respect, former versions of this course had gathered students mainly from Business, Economics and Finance, International Relations, Spanish and Spanish Literature, Social Development, Engineering, and Law. This characteristic conflicted with the course's goals to maintain thematic homogeneity and constant interest of the student population. It prevented the design of a curriculum focusing on particular professions as main objects of study, calling for the identification of a unifying framework of analysis.

Finally, an assessment of the students' needs would not be complete without considering their expectations. Informal surveys showed students were looking for a course that would provide:

- Training in vocabulary and communication techniques inherent to their specific professions

- Knowledge of the conditions in which their respective professions are carried out in Spanish-speaking countries, mainly in Latin America
- Enhancement of their grammatical accuracy and cultural competence.

These concepts framed a clear need to reproduce the professional world within the classroom to the best of possibilities. In turn, this goal called for the use of authentic sources, which might at the same time provide students with tools for further research beyond the course. Within the scope of pedagogical resources available, the case study approach appeared as one of the best strategies to meet this goal.

The Department of Romance Languages of the University of Pennsylvania was the second type of customer, the *internal* customer, to take into account. It was of prime importance to determine the actual level of support and involvement the Department would have in the development of the Spanish course for professional purposes to be designed (Anderson, 1994). The answer to this question was key. Some language departments promote the development of these courses in response to a growing demand, but without actually considering them a strategic constituent of their programs. In these cases, the lack of interest translates into scarcity of resource allocation and weak promotion, putting the viability of the project at risk.

At the University of Pennsylvania, the outlook was promising. The Department of Romance Languages was very interested in offering a course along these lines, and was determined to provide the course with the necessary resources. This position was in turn strengthened through the creation of a Coordinating Division for Business Language Courses and Language Courses for Professional Purposes. The support came directly from the University of Pennsylvania's School of Arts and Sciences, in an effort to work jointly with the Wharton School of Business towards their students' common goals.

As for the Department's specific needs, there was a demand for synergy and complementarity with the other existing courses in the Spanish Program, assurance of students' satisfaction gauged through surveys and evaluation reports, quality of content, and thematic flexibility. To meet these needs, it was vital to position the course adequately within the existing supply of content-specific courses offered in the Department. Language instruction for professional purposes comprised two courses, one oriented to Health Care Professions, the other focused on Business. The former course was

directed to future Health professionals with elementary Spanish skills. It aimed at providing students with basic communicative tools to enhance their efficacy in the assessment and elaboration of diagnoses, and in the description of treatments to Hispanic patients in U.S. hospitals. Not surprisingly, the course's content-specific nature maximized its utility for the target student, but failed to satisfy the demand of students with more advanced levels of Spanish. It left numerous thematic areas not addressed, such as Public Health and Environmental Health.

The Business Spanish course was in turn intended for undergraduate and graduate students in Economics, Management, Marketing and Finance, with an intermediate-high to superior levels of Spanish competence. Its goals were to provide the student with a solid knowledge in Economics, Business Management, Human Resources, Accounting and Finance in the target language. These fields were analyzed from Latin America's perspective and exemplified through the use of case studies from different regions, country presentations, simulations, negotiation, and discussion of current politics and economics.

The target population in this case was similar to that of the Spanish course for professional purposes. In order to offer competitive advantages, differentiation would have to come from content. For example, in the Economics section of the course on Business Spanish, emphasis was not placed on analyzing the determining factors and problems akin to emerging economies in Latin America from the macro perspective (Foreign Debt, Balance of Payment Crisis, Unemployment, Informal Employment, Inflation), but rather on outlining main features in order to weigh the convenience of investing or doing business in any Latin American country. No content specific language courses had been developed in other main concentration areas such as Politics, Economics, International Relations, Social Development, Engineering, Law, Science and Technology, leaving a wide window of opportunities for curriculum design.

3. New Course Concept and Curriculum Design

3.1. *The New Course Concept*

Once market needs and characteristics were identified, the first question to be asked was how to process all of this information to develop the course's concept and curriculum. The answer would depend on the type of course

model that best suited the students' background and goals, and the institution's mission and support.

Brinton (1989) described three approaches for content-based language learning, *theme-based, sheltered* and *adjunct*, each with different possible answers to curriculum design. However, the characteristics of the target student population at the University of Pennsylvania made the use of these models inapplicable. First, a *theme-based* model, centered on language learning, would not be adequate for students who had already achieved high proficiency levels. Second, the diversity of professional concentrations and aspirations of the target students prevented the use of a *sheltered* model, designed to provide specialized content to a group that is homogeneous in professional orientation and with a certain shared background in the field. The new course demanded the selection of content that would train students in professions and real-world skills, but would not assume a shared content background, and would indeed attempt to exploit the synergies that could result from having a multidisciplinary class. Finally, the needs analysis of the student population called for a unique course covering language and content, including the participation of native and non-native students. These features made an *adjunct type* course model also inapplicable. Adjunct programs require offering two interconnected courses, one based purely on language instruction and oriented exclusively to the non-native population, and the other based on content and open to all students.

The suggested models in one way or another fell short of articulating the course's needs. A new model had to be elaborated in accordance with the department's and student population's requirements, as well as the course's own goals. The resulting concept was a hierarchical multi-layered model. In it, each layer serves its specific purposes, is embedded in the discussion of its preceding stratum, and works as a framework for the development of the subsequent layer.

The course was therefore organized in three layers. The top stratum covered the Latin American context, and acted as the course mainstream, rendering thematic structure and building sequential interdependence. This context placed students in a shared background and served as a unifying thread for the analysis of professions and their particular features in Latin America. This structure allowed students to develop a general perspective of Latin America and a particular view of their own professional fields, serving in turn as framework for comparison and contrast with the United States.

The selection of themes to be addressed within the Latin American context included the most relevant issues affecting professions. In this way, students would connect all themes at some point or other with their personal experiences, building on their interests throughout the course, whatever their specialization might be.

Each thematic area typically started by addressing general concepts, and later delved selectively into topics of general interest, but from the viewpoint of a particular profession. This strategy avoided assuming a shared background among students, and granted uniformity to the group. It also allowed *upward spiraling*, as defined by Galloway (1998), to develop more complex issues inherent in each profession, and *downward spiraling* to ensure some anchor point with the student, some sense of belonging to the course.

The second layer focused on the content of specific professions related to each thematic area, and their challenges. The selection of authentic local material played a main role, serving the dual purpose of applying concepts and technical vocabulary to real life situations, and of making students aware of the cultural implications of each profession. Sources of authentic material included official documents, journals, newspaper articles and business magazine case studies, textbooks, online texts and news programs, among others.[1]

The bottom layer stemmed from the previous two, and concentrated on the development of sociolinguistic skills and grammar reinforcement, for successful performance in each professional setting. Spanish competence was to be attained through the application of language functions to specific professional situations requiring grammar precision and the interaction with authentic material.

3.2. *Curriculum Design*

The curriculum design obtained from the above model is described in Tables1 and 2. Table 1 outlines the top layer of the course, which includes the thematic areas selected, the main topics covered, and some of the case studies discussed. Its objective from the design point of view is to give cohesion to the material, covering key thematic areas in Latin America. The arrangement of this layer allows the identification of two main structural features: a vertical hierarchy of thematic areas and a horizontal dimension separating general topics of interest from particular cases for discussion.

[1] A list of sources is provided in the Appendix.

The hierarchical organization of thematic areas was conceived to help students build an understanding of the Latin American context from the Latin American perspective. Each new area contributed with new elements to build on cultural awareness, to be used in the discussion of subsequent themes. For example, the first area covers the modern political systems and basic ideologies, together with their implementation in Latin America. This topic was not only chosen to introduce students to landmarks in current Latin-American history and politics, but to help them perceive the Latin-American perspective on the role of the State in society, the preponderance given to individual leadership over institutions, the local perception about the influence of American and British foreign policies in the region's fate, and the importance and respect given by locals to human and property rights. This developed awareness allowed students to contrast these new paradigms with those of their own cultures, and gave them a more mature point of view to approach the subsequent debates on the importance of the public provision of health and education services, the privatization of strategic natural resources and public utilities, the fundamentals of the male-centered organization of the family nucleus, the role of women in the labor market and the exploitation of children. In sum, this hierarchical design enables the course to simultaneously provide a comprehensive view of Latin America while acting as a cultural bridge.

The horizontal dimension, separating general topics of interest from particular cases for discussion, helps isolate those contents in the program that provide the main body of analysis from those whose primary goal is to give authenticity and topicality to the discussion. While the main topics are less likely to require revision, the case studies should be updated periodically.

Table 2 shows the layered structure of the course. The first column summarizes the top layer and its thematic areas. The second column presents the middle layer, with the vocabulary and particular features of the professions. This does not preclude that students with a certain professional orientation may find the contents of other thematic areas also relevant to their professional environment.[2] Finally, the third column presents the bottom layer with the communicative goals mostly applied in each field.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

One of the aspects of the course to be discussed is the place ascribed to the language component. As previously explained, the inclusion of instructed

[2]Almost all students identified with most areas due to the interdependence of topics.

learning was necessary due to the diversity of language backgrounds in the student population, and also as part of the Department's mission towards linguistic competence.

The course applies different teaching techniques to address the language element in the curriculum and to build on what students already know, giving them the opportunity to construct new meaning, emphasizing deductive learning. The course relies mainly on what Ellis (2002) described as an *integrated option* to relate code-focused to message-focused components. Communicative tasks are indeed presented to reflect the professional workplace as genuinely as possible, yet there is constant feedback by the instructor on learner's attempts to perform communicative tasks. Feedback may be either instant or delayed, depending on the type and length of the activity. For example, students may not be affected by an immediate observation when discussing a topic, exemplifying a concept, or when speculating. However, a delayed remark may prove much more constructive in the case of a presentation, a debate, or negotiation, all situations calling for a great deal of concentration by speaker and listener, and where the interruption of the student's chain of thought can result in frustration. Strong arguments have been advanced for what Long (1991) has called "a focus on form," the reactive feedback while learners' primary attention is on message. Among the course's activities are also intense doses of grammar instruction focusing on relatively few, but problematic, grammatical structures, as suggested by Harley (1989), aiming at preventing fossilization and classroom pidgins, generally associated with purely communicative methods (Skehan, 1996).

Discourse analysis is included, too, to examine contextual uses of language structures and investigate what the speakers do to express meaning in various interactional settings. For example, news programs and case negotiations are particularly rich sources for discourse analysis. In addition to examinations of spoken discourse, students analyze written discourse to see how meaning is conveyed in many types of written texts and genre, especially in magazines and journals, newspapers and official documents. A variety of authentic sources plays a key role in the curriculum. Analysis of written and spoken discourse seems to provide a practical avenue for grammar teaching and learning (Mc Carthy, 1991). Another benefit of using discourse in the classroom is that learners can notice how language contexts affect grammar and meaning and how speakers vary their linguistic structures depending on the sociolinguistic features of interaction. For example, the simulation of a trial provides numerous instances where both

defendant and plaintiff may use the same sentences with different grammar structures and tones to imply hypothesis and innocence, factual information and responsibility, to accuse or to convince the jury.

There is a tendency to associate content-specific courses with purely communicative methods of language instruction. The misconception stems from the fact that communicative methods believe that learners will arrive at intuitive "correctness" of their language, given exposure to, and experience with, the target language (Krashen & Terrell, 1983), and that explicit grammar instruction is therefore not needed.

Though it is seen as a practical and valid way to apply grammar forms, researchers and practitioners have commented that grammatical competence is essential for communication (Brown, 1994; Larsen-Freeman, 1991) but cannot be attained solely through exposure to meaningful input.

Another source of misconceptions may be that typically content-specific courses have students who have already achieved high levels of proficiency (Aharoni, 1994; Grosse and Voght, 1990), so students' grammatical knowledge can be coupled with procedural knowledge through meaning-focused communication. Once a learner's consciousness of a target feature has been raised through formal instruction or through continued communicative exposure, the learner often tends to notice the feature in subsequent input (Ellis, 1996; Schmidt, 1990, 1993). Such continued awareness of a target feature is important because it appears to initiate the restructuring of the learner's implicit or unconscious system of linguistic knowledge (Ellis, 1996; Schmidt, 1990, 1993, Sharwood Smith, 1993).

However, an important limitation of a purely communicative approach is that certain types of language knowledge and skills are difficult to attain in the process of naturalistic learning, for example professional writing or speaking. It has been suggested that advanced proficiency and accuracy in spoken and written production are essential for effective functioning in academic, professional settings, so attaining high levels of language competence and performance may require instructed learning (Ellis, 1996).

The last element to address in order to complete the design process outlined in Section 2.1, is the SWOT analysis. This analysis establishes existing strengths and weaknesses of the course, and helps foresee potential threats and opportunities from the environment, for future update and success of the curriculum.

Among the course's strengths is the right combination of content and form through an integrated option of different teaching approaches. It is

worth pointing out that the "right" balance will be determined by the level of language proficiency required for the treatment of topics as well as the complexity of the course's objectives.[3]

Content wise, the course also develops strengths that center on its treatment of accessible themes through baseline knowledge, on the careful sequencing of themes in order to ensure connection, and on its capacity to provide anchor points for students to identify with, and to engage in, discussion. These goals are suggested by experts in the field of content-based language teaching such as Brinton (1989), Grandin (1992), and von Reinhart (1994). The analysis of Latin America through authentic material presents thematic connection and transferability through contextual associations. In terms of strategic training, discussion of actual challenges in Latin American professional settings guides students into true cross-cultural reflection and professional sociolinguistic competence. Lastly, the multi-layered nature of content design makes the course flexibility in any area or profession. The curriculum is structured in a way that allows modification at any of its three levels.

Even with these strengths, the course presents some weaknesses that stem primarily from the lack of a course book that may condense information without neglecting the above described qualities and purposes. Content material is mainly dependent on real-world texts, which are in many cases lengthy and wordy. Though these features may be partly ascribed to Latin American culture, it is true that official documents tend to have too extensive and elaborate a style for students, who at times perceive some readings as very demanding. This is important, too, given the fact that Spanish for the Professions is a one-semester course with an already demanding content. Interestingly enough, informal discussions with students also seem to hint that this reaction may spring from the misconception that language courses are "relaxed," "easy-going," and not as "intensive as career-specific courses."

The existence of the strong and weak points indicates the course has internal factors that must be observed constantly to keep the course competitive, eliminate obstacles, and optimize assets. These internal factors do not, however, operate in isolated units, but in turn depend on external threats and opportunities from the environment. On identifying potential threats,

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[3]For descriptive purposes, time management of a typical class (1 hour 20 minutes) allots one third of the time to language, and two thirds to content.

the course segmentation by Spanish intermediate-high to superior proficiency levels makes its demand highly dependent on the quality of previous language instruction. Should quality results not be assured at the initial and intermediate Spanish courses, the course's positioning and objectives would target a non-existent segment.

Another foreseeable threat stems from the current awareness of the need to develop language courses specialized in each professional field. In the near future, such courses could outweigh competitive advantages of a more diversified type of course. Yet, whenever the specialization phase fully develops, this type of course will clearly have a window of opportunity if strategically positioned as an introductory course providing an overarching perspective of Latin America in a less specific professional context. It may additionally function as a course to train students in communication skills and tasks akin to all professions, such as the enhancement of presentation techniques and resumé design, among others. This will allow students to later attend their career-specific language courses with an enhanced cultural awareness and understanding of underlying challenges in Latin America.

To conclude, the application of marketing techniques has proved to be a very powerful tool for the design of a language course. They constitute a systematic procedure to refine course goals accurately, optimally select the target student population and best position the course within a given language program. In the particular case presented, marketing techniques also proved to be very useful in helping to conceive a new course model addressing the multiple constraints imposed by the environment, as well as in pointing to potential directions for future curriculum improvement. Hopefully, this case study will not only provide language instructors with a course curriculum for future use, but also help convince Language Departments of the utility of this approach for the further curricular enhancement of their language courses and programs.

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Table 1. Top Layer of the Spanish for the Professions Curriculum

Thematic Area	*Topics Covered*	*Case Studies of Interest*
Politics	Political Systems and Basic Ideologies	Castro (Cuba)
	Division of Power	Fujimori (Peru)
	Totalitarianism, Militarism, Authoritarianism, Nationalism, Parliamentary Democracy	Pinochet (Chile)
	Marxist Guerrilla	PRI (Mexico)
	Corruption	Chavez (Venezuela)
		Peron (Argentina)
		Marcos and the EZLN (Mexico)
		Che Guevara (Cuba)
Law	Systems: Civil Law, Common Law, Theocratic Law	Conflict of jurisdiction between legislations of different countries
	Private and Public Law	Civil Law vs. Common Law: Carlos Slim vs. Comp USA
	National and International Law	
	Lawyers and the Profession	
	Judicial Power—Public Order Mechanisms	Judge Baltazar Garzón—Extradition of Pinochet
	Conflict Resolution	Trial of the Military Juntas in Argentina
Economics	Planned, Mixed and Market Economies	Trade between the United States–Cuba
	Main Problems: Tax Evasion, Deficit, Inflation, Foreign Debt, International Competitiveness	OPEC, Pemex and PDVSA
		Coffee Crisis
		Maquiladora Industry: Mexico vs. China
		Mercosur, NAFTA, EU
	Main Industries	Conflicting interests in NAFTA
	Economic Integration	
Society	Demography	Women's living conditions and Pregnancy mortality rate
	Poverty	Child exploitation
	Income Distribution	From the Breadwinner System to Women in the Labor Force—
	Unemployment, Informal Economy	Impact and Consequences in the Nuclear Family
	Families	The Fall of the Middle Class
Health	Concept of Public Health	Public Health vs. Private Health: The Health System in Cuba
	Health Policies: State vs. Market	
	Health Insurance	
	Health Care Management	Physicians or Managers?
	Emerging Viral Diseases	
	Millennium Diseases: Anorexia, Bulimia, Panic Disorder, HIV, etc.	Operating on Fantasies—the Plastic Surgery Boom in Latin America

Table 1. (Cont.)

Thematic Area	*Topics Covered*	*Case Studies of Interest*
Environmental Issues	Environmental Problems in Latin America Pollution Global Warming	Pollution in Mexico City and Santiago de Chile Acid Rain
Education	The Educational System in Argentina Public vs. Private education School Dropouts—Illiteracy	Financing of Education Pedagogical Approaches
Science and Technology	Agricultural Biotechnology Transgenic Products—Biogenetics	Transgenic Products, a business? Cloning
Human Resources Management	Looking for a job Staffing and Expatriation Issues with Repatriation The Intercultural approach as a challenge	Administrative Training at Dow Personnel Interview and Selection Cultural Misunderstandings: are you ready for culture shock?

Table 2. Layers Comprising the Spanish for the Professions Course

Thematic Area	*Professions Covered*	*Communicative Goals*
Politics	Government officials (Presidents, Congressmen, Governors) The Military	Providing Historical Background • Narrating past events • Hypothesizing based on counterfactual information. • Making predictions • Comparing different systems Political & Legal Discourse • Planning & Promoting courses of action. • Persuading • Attacking and supporting opinions. • Expressing wishes • Drawing conclusions

Table 2. (Cont.)

Thematic Area	*Professions Covered*	*Communicative Goals*
Law	Lawyers Judges Businessmen	Setting a Case • Oral advocacy • Providing evidence to support a statement • Attacking the accused/ defending the defendant • Persuading the jury Analyzing evidence • Weighing justification and facts • Reaching a verdict Resolution of Conflicts • Negotiating and making concessions • Creating consensus
Economics	Economists Government officials Businessmen	Presenting the Economic Scenario • Gathering and giving information about countries • Describing and interpreting graphs and data • Defining and exemplifying concepts • Making predictions based on contrary-to-fact situations • Comparing Market Structures • Expressing Pros and Cons • Suggesting Strategies Industries • Gathering and giving information about industries • Portraying problems and suggesting solutions • Making predictions based on concrete evidence

Table 2. (Cont.)

Thematic Area	*Professions Covered*	*Communicative Goals*
Society	Economists Social workers Healthcare professionals	Demographic Challenges • Comparing rich and poor countries • Tracking origin and evolution of problems • Suggesting solutions and strategies • Making predictions based on concrete information Families • Describing different structures and changes in the composition of families • Providing reasons for such changes • Family planning • Making predictions based on trends
Health	Physicians Nurses Psychologists Pharmacists Biochemists	• Describing different health systems • Weighing advantages and disadvantages • Making predictions based on concrete facts • Describing the condition of health care management in hospitals • Planning & Promoting courses of action to solve systematic problems • Inquiring about health problems • Making diagnoses • Suggesting treatments • Predictions on evolution of patients • Hypothesizing on modern evils and potential outcomes
Environmental Issues	Environmentalists Chemical Engineers Meteorologists	• Gathering information • Establishing comparison and contrast • Assessing magnitude of pollution and damage • Making suggestions for solutions • Devising strategies for implementing courses of action • Hypothesizing and making predictions based on factual information

Table 2. (Cont.)

Thematic Area	*Professions Covered*	*Communicative Goals*
Education	Teachers, Professors, Educators Social workers Psychologists	• Assessing current conditions and pinpointing problems • Describing sources of conflict • Suggesting pedagogical approaches • Making concessions and reaching consensus • Persuading • Eliciting strategies to minimize or eradicate problems
Science and Technology	Scientists Agricultural Engineers Bioengineers	• Conceptualizing a Transgenic Product • Exemplifying uses • Expressing agreement and disagreement • Defending opinions about cloning • Making predictions based on research and development
Human Resources Management	Managers Consultants	Applying for a Job • Talking about a company's or person's background, skills and experience • Preparing a resume • Describing tasks in a firm • Writing a job application letter • Advertising a job position Personnel Interviewing • Gathering and eliciting information • Profiling the ideal candidate • Personnel selection: weighing advantages and disadvantages • Promoting a candidate • Rejecting a candidate • Expressing point of view on expatriation/ repatriation Culture Shock • Describing reactions, impressions and emotions • Pinpointing differences and similarities • Suggesting ways to adjust to culture shock

APPENDIX: SOME USEFUL SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Revista América Economía: www.americaecnomia.com

Revista Expansión: www.expansion.com.mx

Revista Mercado: www.mercado.com.ar

Revista Negocios: www.negocios.com.ar

Revista Proceso: www.proceso.com.mx

Diarios de Latinoamérica

Negocios Internacionales, Daniels & Radebaugh, Pearson Education, 2000

Marketing Estratégico en Latinoamérica, Casos de estudio, Guillermo D'Andrea & John Quelch, Prentice Hall, 2001

Administración de Mercadotecnia, Czinkota & Kotable, Thomson Learning, 2001

Español para los negocios: Estudios de casos, Irene Mizrahi & Gregory B. Kaplan, Mc Graw Hill, 1998

Historia de América Latina, Mercedes Quintana, Edinumen, 1999

Marcos, La Genial Impostura, Bertrand de la Grange & Maite Rico, Nuevo Siglo Aguilar, 1997

Documentos de la CEPAL: www.cepal.org